

AMENDMENTS

In the drawings:

Amend Figure 1 as shown on the attached replacement drawing sheet.

REMARKS

Applicant has amended claim 5 to provide the proper antecedent basis for the term “the pre-fixation guide” as suggested by the Examiner, thereby mooting the Examiner’s objection thereto.

Applicant has amended claim 1 by adding a semicolon and a colon to improve the readability of the claim. The amendments to claim 1 do not alter the scope of the claim.

The Examiner objected to the drawings for failing to include reference numerals/signs 10, 54 and T as detailed in the specification. Applicant has amended Figure 1 to include reference numeral 10. Additionally, applicant has amended paragraphs [0026] and [0035] of the specification to remove reference numeral 54 and reference sign T. Inclusion of these indicators is not necessary for an understanding of the claimed subject matter.

Claims 1, 2, 6 and 7 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(e) on Yura (U.S. Patent No. 6,795,678). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Applicant’s claim 1 recites that a “contact area between the fixing belt and the nip forming member outside the fixing nip is smaller on an entrance side of the fixing nip than on an exit side of the fixing nip.” This feature is not disclosed or suggested by Yura.

Applicant’s Figure 2 shows a stationary nip forming member 20 positioned opposite a pressurizing roller 50 where the nip forming member 20 is configured such that the contact area between the fixing belt 12 and the nip forming member 20 outside the fixing nip 40 is smaller on the entrance side 26 of the fixing nip 40 than on the exit side 24 of the fixing nip 40. More simply put, the length of the contact area at the entrance to the nip (identified by reference numeral 26 and the accompanying bracket) is less than the length of the contact area at the exit from the nip (similarly identified by reference numeral 24 and the accompanying bracket).

Yura, however, as shown in Figure 5, discloses an apparatus in which a stationary nip forming member 19 and a fixing belt 15 do not make contact outside the nip on an exit side of the fixing nip. Instead, the nip forming member 19 of Yura does not extend beyond the nip, and as a

result all contact between the fixing belt 15 and the nip forming member 19 ends inside the nip. Because Yura does not disclose any contact area between the fixing belt 15 and the nip forming member 19 outside the nip at an exit side of the nip, Yura does not, and cannot, disclose or suggest that such a contact area is greater than the contact area on the entrance side of the nip. Accordingly, applicant's claim 1 is allowable over Yura.

Claim 6 has been amended to recite that "a contact area between the belt member and the nip forming member outside the fixing nip is smaller on an entrance side of the fixing nip than on an exit side of the fixing nip." Accordingly, claim 6 is also allowable for at least the reasons detailed above.

Claims 2 and 7 depend from allowable claims and are therefore also allowable.

Claims 4 and 5 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) on Yura. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. Claims 4 and 5 depend from allowable claim 1 and are therefore also allowable over Yura for at least the reasons detailed above.


Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 USC 103(a) on Yura in view of Yasui (U.S. Patent No. 6,807,386). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. Yasui does not disclose or suggest a stationary nip forming member and therefore does not disclose the features of claim 1 discussed above. Claim 3 is also allowable due at least to its dependence on allowable claim 1.

Applicant solicits an early action allowing the claims.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief, including extensions of time; and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing Docket No. 204552032300.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments